

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTIAGO 1947

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, MASS, CI
SUBJECT: GROWTH OF ANTI-US SENTIMENT IN CHILE

FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY ROGERS FROM AMBASSADOR

REF: STATE 282507, DEC 27, 1974

1. I HAVE KEPT IN MIND YOUR INTEREST IN BEING FULLY INFORMED OF THE EFFECTS IN CHILE OF THE CONGRESSIONAL ARMS BAN (REFTEL). IN OUR MESSAGES IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING PASSAGE OF THE FOREIGN ASSISTANCE ACT OF 1974 WE POINTED OUT THAT THE BAN WAS ONLY ONE OF SEVERAL FACTORS IMPINGING UPON CHILEAN OPINION, AND THAT IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO ISOLATE THE EFFECT OF THIS PARTICULAR ACTION, BUT THAT WE WOULD DO OUR BEST TO ADVISE YOU OF CHANGES IN CHILEAN ATTITUDES AS THEY OCCURRED.

2. IN THE SUCCEEDING THREE MONTHS WE HAVE BEEN IMPRESSED WITH THE MATURE AND RESTRAINED REACTION TO THE ARMS BAN, AND TO FAA LIMITATIONS ON ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE, ON THE PART OF THE CHILEANS, INCLUDING MILITARY OFFICERS OF HIGHER RANK IN AND OUT OF GOVERNMENT. IN GENERAL CHILEANS HAVE COUCHED THEIR COMMENTS TO US IN TERMS OF SORROW RATHER THAN ANGER, WITH AN UNUSUAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE WAY IN WHICH THE CONGRESSIONAL MAJORITY HAS PREVENTED THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH FROM MOVING FORWARD WITH WHAT CHILEANS HAD REGARDED AS COMMITMENTS TO IMPROVE THEIR
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MILITARY MATERIEL BASE VIS-A-VIS PERU. WHATEVER BITTERNESS

THEY HAVE FELT THEY HAVE KEPT LARGELY TO THEMSELVES.

3. I SENSE THE BEGINNING OF A CHANGE IN THE CHILEANS' FOREBERANCE. THE CHANGE IS COMING ABOUT LESS BECAUSE OF THE ARMS BAN THAN BECAUSE OF THE INTENSELY DRAMATIC IMPACT, AMONG THE CHILEANS, OF THE DIFFICULTIES WHICH HAVE ENVELOPED US FOREIGN POLICY ON SO MANY FRONTS IN RECENT WEEKS. LACKING A SENSE OF HISTORY, A GOOD MANY CHILEANS ARE PRONE TO SELL THE US SHORT; TO CONCLUDE THAT WE ARE EITHER LESS CAPABLE OR LESS DEPENDABLE THAN THEY HAD THOUGHT; AND TO DRAW THE CONCLUSION THAT OUR DEFICIENCIES ARE AT LEAST IN PART THE RESULT OF OUR SOFTNESS TOWARD COMMUNISM. WITHOUT BEING AT ALL CLEAR ON WHAT ALTERNATIVES THEY HAVE, THESE VOICES SUGGEST THAT PERHAPS CHILE SHOULD INCREASINGLY LOOK ELSEWHERE FOR SUPPORT. AND THERE IS AN ANTI-AMERICAN EDGE TO THEIR COMMENTS.

4. I COMMEND TO YOU TWO RATHER STRIKING MESSAGES IN THIS REGARD. THE FIRST, DESCRIBING THE REMARKS OF CHILEAN OFFICERS IN BRAZIL, IS CONTAINED IN USDAO BRASILIA MESSAGE NO. 146 OF MARCH 1975 (IR 6-809-0082-75, 311400Z MARCH 75). THIS MESSAGE WAS SENT TO DIA AND NOT TO STATE, BUT I AM SURE YOUR STAFF CAN GET IT. THE SECOND MESSAGE IS ONE FROM OUR OWN DAO (DATT-IR0076 APRIL 75) AND MAKES VERY MUCH THE SAME SORT OF POINT, IN MORE DETAIL. IT HAS BEEN REPEATED TO STATE.

5. I DO NOT WANT TO EXAGGERATE. THERE HAS BEEN NO APPRECIABLE CHANGE IN THE POSITION OF THE GOVERNMENT, AND NO GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN HAS REACTED TO ANY EMBASSY PERSONNEL IN THE TERMS USED IN THESE MESSAGES. BUT BECAUSE THIS IS ALMOST TOTALLY A MILITARY GOVERNMENT, THE THOUGHTS EXPRESSED BY THE CHILEAN MILITARY ON THE PROFESSIONAL LEVEL ARE BOUND TO PERCOLATE UPWARD, AND THE EFFECTS ARE LIKELY SOON TO BECOME APPARENT.

6. TO COME BACK TO THE ARMS BAN, I WOULD POINT OUT THAT THE SERIES OF REBUFFS THE CHILEANS THINK THEY HAVE RECEIVED FROM US GIVES A POWERFUL IMPETUS TO SUCH ANTI-US
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SENTIMENTS. THE CHILEANS ARE SMARTING FROM WHAT THEY REGARD AS THE DOUBLE STANDARD APPLIED TO THEM BY CRITICS ABROAD WHO CONDONE MUCH MORE COMPREHENSIVE HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN COMMUNIST STATES. ONE ELEMENT TO BE WEIGHED IN DECIDING HOW FAR THE USG SHOULD GO IN APPLYING MILITARY AND ECONOMIC PRESSURES AGAINST CHILE ON HUMAN RIGHTS GROUNDS IS THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE CHILEAN REACTION MAY WEAKEN THE POSITION OF MODERATE AND REASONABLE MEN IN

THIS COUNTRY. TO THE EXTENT THAT THIS HAPPENS, OUR
LEVERAGE IN SEEKING IMPROVED HUMAN RIGHTS PRACTICES
THROUGH PERSUASION WILL BE REDUCED. I AM NOT SUGGESTING
THAT WE CHANGE OUR PRESENT STANCE ON THESE MATTERS,
BUT SIMPLY POINTING OUT WHAT THE CONSEQUENCES MIGHT BE,
IN THE DEVELOPING ATMOSPHERE.

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